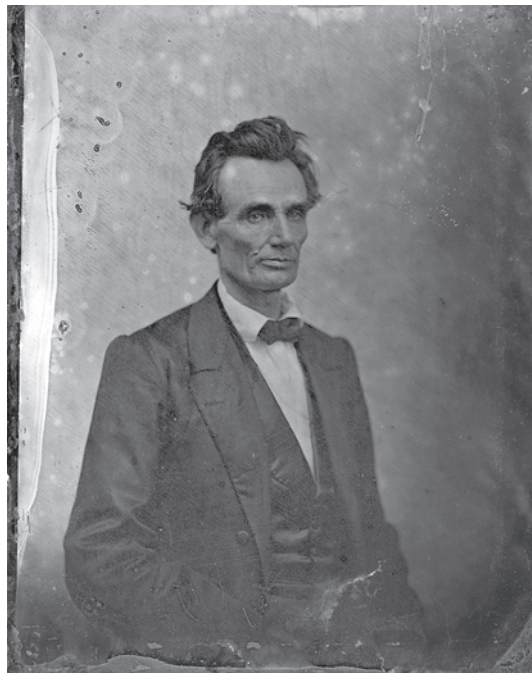


Abraham Lincoln's

200th Birthday



Our Abraham Lincoln ambrotype isn't just a print or a replica. We have the actual 1860 plate from a photographer's studio in Springfield, Illinois.

They called him Father Abraham

and for Nebraska this is literally true. Nebraska was the first state added to the Union after the Civil War, when the Union was in fact guaranteed. Though he never stepped foot on Nebraska soil, he did look at it from across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs in 1859 and, according to some, was convinced by Grenville Dodge that Omaha should be the jumping off point for the great transcontinental railroad.


Lincoln signed into law the acts that created homesteads, the railroad, and the University of Nebraska. All are things that define the state.

Lincoln, Nebraska, is the biggest city in the United States named after our nation's sixteenth president, so it's fitting the community will celebrate Abe's birthday bash in fine style. Four days of activities will culminate with Doris Kearns Goodwin, noted historian and author of the best-selling *Team of Rivals*, speaking on Sunday, February 15, at the Lied Center in Lincoln.

Nebraska State Historical Society activities will include the 2009 winter film series "The REEL Lincoln: Screen Depictions of Abraham Lincoln" beginning on Sunday, January 18, and continuing through February 22. Lincoln-related artifacts will be on display at the Museum of Nebraska History including a bronze life mask of the president based on a cast taken by artist Leonard Volk in 1860. (See "From the Collection" on p. 8.)

A rare ambrotype, showing an unbearded Lincoln and possibly taken when he was campaigning for the presidency, will give museum visitors an up close view of one of the few such photographs known to exist.

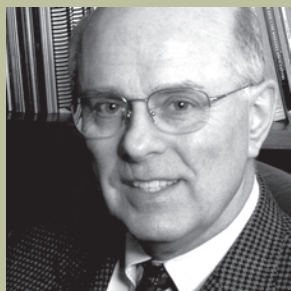
The Thomas P. Kennard House at 1627 H Street will be open by appointment. Built in 1869, the house interprets life in the new capital city named after the slain leader. Call (402) 471-4764.

See the calendar of events for details, or call us at (800) 833-6747. 



The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.

Lincoln, January 2009



Governor Dave Heineman has been using Husker radio broadcasts this fall to urge Nebraskans to consider working in State service. To this newsletter we welcome one who responded, David Bristow, who began work as our Associate Director for Research & Publications on November 3rd. David was most recently Managing Editor of Nebraska Life. We anticipate his contributions to our Nebraska History journal, this newsletter, and all NSHS communications in the years to come.

“The NSHS depends on finding, hiring, training, supporting, and keeping talent in all of our service areas.”

The NSHS depends on finding, hiring, training, supporting and keeping talent in all of our service areas. Recently, Dr. Gayla Koerting, a Nebraskan by birth and upbringing, has come from the University of South Dakota to take up the work of our Government Records Archivist, while Jess Nunn, new to Nebraska, brought her University of Wyoming masters degree in historic preservation to our staff. David, Gayla, and Jess join the ninety-plus members of the NSHS staff, a very highly-regarded force working for the people of Nebraska.

Staff development and retention is essential for our work, now and into the future. Therefore, I am committed to finding ways for staff to realize new opportunities and challenges which can encourage them to stay with the NSHS, whether that be as trained professionals, key support staff, or in innovative collaborative arrangements such as that which is enabling Paintings Conservator Kenneth Bé to work with both UN-Omaha and the NSHS's Ford Conservation Center Division. Finding, training, and keeping are all key elements in the never-ending task of ensuring that Nebraska's history is in the best hands possible. I appreciate your continuing support of our staff.

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO

The End Is Near!

Or so it may seem if you're planning to use the archives and reference room at NSHS Headquarters in Lincoln. It will be closed to patrons and staff during a major renovation that begins in March.



Our last big “remodel”—Sen. Daniel Garber places cement on the cornerstone of NSHS headquarters, July 16, 1952.

Andrea Faling, associate director of the library archives, hasn't had too many irate researchers contact her about the closing.

“They are taken by surprise,” she said. “But they tend to feel sorry for us.”

Even as we write this newsletter, Society staffers are packing up cluttered offices and preparing to move to temporary quarters elsewhere in the building. As mass migrations go, the three-phase project doesn't compare to the Oregon Trail, but it will be an inconvenience for everyone.

But well worth it. The \$6.2 million renovation will improve safety conditions

by removing asbestos, adding a sprinkler system, and building emergency exits and fire escape stairs. In addition, contractors will replace the heating and air conditioning system and build a first-floor, handicapped-accessible bathroom.

The renovation is the building's largest since opening in 1953, says Charley McWilliams, facilities and maintenance manager for the Society.

"The heating system is original, the ceilings are original, some of the lighting is original," he said.

Construction is expected to begin by early March 2009, and will end in 2011.

"But that doesn't mean the building will be closed for the entire two years," Faling said. The staff plans to open the reference room whenever possible. Right now it's too early to predict just when that will be—so before planning a visit, check nebraskahistory.org for the latest news.

Why not move the collections to keep them available? Faling said the Society considered this, but the time and money involved would have been impractical. Fortunately, many of our photos and other archival materials have been digitized. Depending on what you're looking for, we may still be able to help you during the renovation. Call us and ask.

Both McWilliams and Faling said that even though the makeover will be a complicated process, it will make working in the building a better experience for patrons and staff alike.

"We are trying to make the building safer and more accessible for everybody," McWilliams said. "That's what it's all about." ❏



Seventh Fort Robinson History Conference to be Held April 23–25

Are you interested in the history of U.S. Army posts on the Great Plains? If so, plan to attend the 2009 Fort Robinson History Conference, to be held at historic Fort Robinson near Crawford.

Co-sponsored by the NSHS and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the program will include presentations about the history of specific forts and camps, material culture, soldier life, and



Camp Robinson, 1875. NSHS RG1517:13-9

military architecture. They will be illustrated with historic photos, the work of soldier artists, documents, and objects recovered archeologically.

A highlight will be a bus tour to Fort Laramie National Historic Site, the post from which the first troops marched to establish Camp Robinson in 1874. Built by fur traders and purchased by the army in 1849, Fort Laramie's storied career spans the years of the great overland migrations and the Indian wars in the West. Attendees will get a behind-the-scenes look at important buildings and collections.

As always, you can buy autographed books by noted military historians. The conference will conclude with a banquet

Continued on page 4



and address by Dr. Sherry L. Smith, professor of History at Southern Methodist University, and author of books such as *Sagebrush Soldier: Private William Earl Smith's View of the Sioux War of 1876* (1989) and *The View from Officers' Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians* (1990).

Lodging is available in renovated barracks and officers' quarters. NSHS's Fort Robinson Museum is the conference headquarters. See nebraskahistory.org for registration forms, or call 1-800-833-6747 or (402) 471-3272. 🏠

How "VIP" Saves Historic Buildings

When Loup City businessman Paul Eurek decided to restore the historic Carnegie Library, he might have faced a powerful disincentive... but didn't.



NSHS is guiding the restoration of Loup City's 1917 Carnegie Library.

Until 2006, Nebraskans who rehabilitated historic properties faced higher property taxes once the property was reassessed. Thanks to the Valuation Incentive Program, qualifying properties can get a temporary hold on higher taxes if they meet preservation standards.

Built in 1917, Loup City's grand Carnegie Library is a fine example of Neoclassical Revival architecture. But after a new library opened in 1998, the building sat empty for a decade. It has now re-opened as a community technology center, and as the offices of Xpansion, Eureka's technology business.

To qualify for the program, Eureka worked with Grant Landreth of the NSHS Historic Preservation Division. Landreth ensures that VIP rehabilitation work meets preservation standards.

With its twenty-foot-high tin ceilings, original wood floors and red tile roof, the once-decaying building is again the jewel of Loup City's town square. It is one of about twenty current projects statewide that are benefiting from VIP. (And though federal programs cover only income-producing projects, homeowners can qualify for VIP as well.)

"The state doesn't have a lot of grant money," Landreth says, "but we now at least have something to provide an incentive to owners of private property."

The resulting economic impact is impressive. VIP's first 16 projects involved more than \$25 million of private funds. As Loup City has learned, landmarks of the past are good investments for the future. 🏠

"Recovered Views" Returns

Lincoln photographer John Johnson images are remarkable not only for their technical brilliance, but also for the rare glimpse they offer into the capital city's black community. "Recovered Views: African-American Portraits, 1912–1925," is an exhibition of digital prints that has toured coast-to-coast for four years. It will be at the Museum of Nebraska History at 15th & P in Lincoln, January 8–March 1. It is made possible by the generous loan of negatives owned by the McWilliams family of Lincoln. 🏠

Snowbound Nebraska: The Winter of 1948–49

“His face was bleeding where it had frozen then the ice had pulled away, taking hide and all,” said a Cherry County woman of her rancher husband. He “warmed up a little and drank a cup of hot cocoa then went back out to finish taking care of the stock” ...and couldn’t shave for weeks.

This is the sixtieth anniversary of that brutal winter. Historian Harl Dahlstrom gathered photos and stories for a double-issue of *Nebraska History*, “I’m Never Going to be Snowbound Again: The Winter of 1948–49 in Nebraska” (Fall/Winter 2002). It’s only \$5 (including shipping and tax) from the NSHS Museum Store. (402) 471-3447. ☐

Our New Board Members

Three new members have joined the Nebraska State Historical Society Board of Trustees. Our governing board includes twelve members elected by NSHS members, and three appointed by the governor. Three-year terms began January 1.

Sheryl Schmeckpeper, Norfolk, is the Living section editor for the *Norfolk Daily News*, author of *Images of America: Norfolk, Nebraska*, and a contributor to *Nebraska Life* magazine.

Shannon D. Smith, Gordon, is a doctoral student in history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She teaches at Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and is the author of *Give Me Eighty Men: Women and the Myth of the Fetterman Fight*.

James (Jim) Whitaker, North Platte, served eight years as mayor and has held leadership roles in groups ranging from the local airport authority to the Creativity Unlimited Arts Council and the League of Nebraska Municipalities. ☐

21st ANNUAL FILM SERIES THE REEL LINCOLN SCREEN DEPICTIONS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

January 18

***Young Mr. Lincoln* • (1939)**

Starring Henry Fonda

January 25

***Abe Lincoln in Illinois* • (1940)**

Starring Raymond Massey

February 1

***Abraham Lincoln: Preserving the Union* • (2008)**

February 8

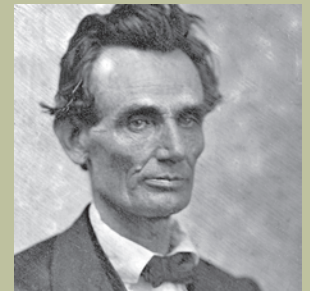
***Abraham and Mary Lincoln: A House Divided* • (2001)**

February 15

***Lincoln: The Making of a President* • (1992)**

February 22

***The Lincoln Assassination* • (1995)**



All films are shown, free of charge, at the Museum of Nebraska History, 15th & P Streets, Lincoln, at 1:30 p.m. Seating is limited.



Research Grants for 2009

Every year, the NSHS Foundation awards one or more \$1,000 grants to researchers who use our facilities. If you’ve read “The End Is Near!” on p. 2, you already know the problem: The library and archives will be closed for much of 2009.

So we’re extending the deadline. Send your proposal to David Bristow, Editor, at the return address on this newsletter (or by email to david.bristow@nebraska.gov) by April 1, 2009. We’ll announce the winner(s) in May. Grant recipients will then have until April 1, 2011 to complete their manuscripts. See nebraskahistory.org/publish/grants for details. ☐

David Bristow
John Carter
Patricia Gaster
Lynne Ireland
James Potter
editorial staff

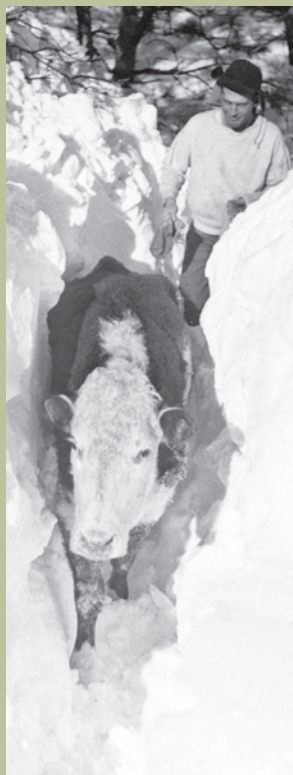
Kylie Kinley
contributor

Debra Brownson
design & production

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.



A Dawes County rancher frees a cow from a drift during the winter of 1948-49. NSHS RG3139-80



January 8-March 1

"Recovered Views: African-American Portraits, 1912-1925"

Exhibition

Museum of Nebraska History

15th & P streets, Lincoln

402-471-4754

January 11 • 2-4 p.m.

Family Scrapbooking Workshop

Talk by Donna Bailey with activity to follow

Museum of Nebraska History

jkeetle@nebraskahistory.org

January 15 • 12 noon

"The Great Plains Tipi"

Mark Awakuni-Swetland, UN-L

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Museum of Nebraska History

February 1-28

Abraham Lincoln

Exhibition of life mask, ambrotype

Museum of Nebraska History

February 11 • 7 p.m.

NET Premiere "Looking for Lincoln" Documentary

Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center

313 N. 13th St., Lincoln

402-472-5353

www.lincoln.ne.gov

402-441-7831

(tickets required)

February 12 • 7:30 p.m.

Jay Ungar and Molly Mason Family Band Concert

Lied Center for Performing Arts

12th & R Sts., Lincoln

402-472-4700

www.lincoln.ne.gov

402-441-7831

(tickets required)

February 13 • 7:30 p.m.

Civil War Voices

Jim Harris, author; Mark Hayes composer

Music based on Civil War correspondence

Lied Center for Performing Arts

www.lincoln.ne.gov

402-441-7831

(tickets required)

February 14

Family Day

Smith Family Band, Michael Krebs and Debra

Ann Miller as President and Mrs. Lincoln

Southwest High School

7001 S. 14th St., Lincoln

www.lincoln.ne.gov

402-441-7831

February 15 • 7:30 p.m.

Forum

Doris Kearns Goodwin, author, historian

Lied Center for Performing Arts

www.lincoln.ne.gov

402-441-7831

(tickets required for free forum)

February 19 • 12 noon

"Did Lincoln Visit Nebraska? Why is the Capital City Named Lincoln?"

Jim McKee, Lincoln

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Museum of Nebraska History

February 27, 2009-February 2010

"Nebraska Gone Crazy!: Crazy Quilts from Nebraska Museums" Exhibition

Quilts will be rotated in September 2009

Museum of Nebraska History

March 1

Family Memory Quilting Workshop

For speaker: www.nebraskahistory.org

Museum of Nebraska History

jkeetle@nebraskahistory.org

March 19 • 12 noon

"The First Nebraska at Fort Donelson"

Gayla Koerting, NSHS curator

of government records

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Museum of Nebraska History

NSHS

foundation news



January/February/March 2009

A Letter From a Lifetime Member

I am a proud Lifetime Member of the Nebraska State Historical Society and have been since my husband, Charlie, gave me a membership as a Christmas gift. I have to admit that it wasn't the chair I was hoping for at the time, but it has turned out to be a most enjoyable gift—and one that I've never had to dust!

Over the years I learned that the NSHS does much more than collect the “dusty stuff” of history. They provide assistance to researchers, hands-on education to students, tools for Nebraska educators, and materials to filmmakers like NET and Ken Burns. They also maintain historical sites all over the state, like Chimney Rock, Fort Robinson, and Willa Cather's home in Red Cloud, just to name a few. These are all priceless resources!

How much do you pay for membership? I'll plead the Fifth Amendment if you try to ask me just how long ago it was...but

without incriminating myself too much, what Charlie paid for my membership back then would barely buy a pizza dinner now. What a small price to pay in exchange for being part of something extraordinary!

The Nebraska State Historical Society needs you and me, its members, to be both financial supporters and enthusiastic advocates across the state. I am proud to invest in their exciting programs and I hope you will join with me in giving to the NSHS Foundation. Your donation will help strengthen the Nebraska State Historical Society—a valuable resource to us all.

I warmly thank you for your support and solidarity.

Diane Oldfather
Lifetime Member and
NSHS Foundation Trustee

**Over the years
I learned that
the NSHS does
much more
than collect the
“dusty stuff”
of history.**



If you would like more information on how you can support these and other exciting NSHS programs, contact the NSHS Foundation, 128 N. 13th St., Ste 1010, Lincoln, NE, 68502, call 402-435-3535, or e-mail info@nshsf.org.

hours

**Museum of
Nebraska History**
15 & P Streets, Lincoln
402-471-4754

Tuesday–Friday, 9–4:30
Sat. & Sun., 1–4:30
Closed Monday

Museum Store
402-471-3447

Tuesday–Friday, 10–4:30
Saturday & Sunday, 1–4
Closed Monday

Library/Archives
1500 R Street, Lincoln
402-471-4751

Tuesday–Friday, 9–12, 1–4
Saturday, 8–5

State Historic Site hours:
www.nebraskahistory.org

N E B R A S K A

history news

Nebraska State Historical Society

From the collection. . .

It took some persuasion for Chicago artist Leonard Volk to get Abraham Lincoln to sit



for a bust in April 1860. To reduce the number of sittings, the artist made a plaster cast of Lincoln's face. The man who would shortly win the Republican presidential nomination sat for an hour breathing through a straw while the plaster set up. Lincoln said he found the process "anything but agreeable" (though he sat for a second "life mask" in 1865). The original casts eventually went to the National Museum in Washington. This bronze copy was a gift to General John J. Pershing in 1920 from Douglas Volk, the artist's son. 🏛️

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